

FEATURES FROM LIFE;

Ann O R, *A. Hall*

A SUMMER VISIT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

GEORGE BATEMAN, AND MARIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, 46, Fleet-Street.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

JOHN

1117001.00000



Ann Shewell

FEATURES FROM LIFE,

OR,

A SUMMER VISIT.

CHAP. I.

MATILDA went directly, on leaving the parlour, to her own room, her heart full of inquietude. A perfect integrity, humanly speaking, formed the basis of Matilda's character. Her understanding, naturally clear and comprehensive, had been cultivated to a

VOL. II.

B

high

high degree of elegant refinement, which, though it sometimes increased her pleasures, more frequently augmented her griefs, and was indeed the spring from whence they often solely flowed. Her heart, in that season of life when imagination adorns with its most brilliant tints the objects on which it delights to dwell, giving a keener edge to all our passions, had yielded itself to one, who estimated the possession of it as the highest and most honourable prize in the wheel of fortune.

The similarity of Conway's pursuits, his temper, his understanding, to Matilda's, and his unremitting attention to her happiness, had made the few years they had lived together roll on in such

... a state



a state of tranquil pleasure, that Mrs. Conway could not sometimes, when she compared her own situation with that of others, help recurring to an expression of Dr. Young:

All more than common menaces an end.

And a dread would at times arise, lest the loss of any part of his affection, which made all the happiness of her life, should throw an endless gloom over the then vivid scene.

Conway had hitherto, she remarked to herself, let him have differed ever so much with her in matters of opinion, always retained a firm belief in the uprightness of her intentions, whatever he might think of her judgment in the par-

ticular from which he dissented. She now thought she perceived the colour of her fate beginning to change; she fancied he now began to put the most unfavourable constructions on her conduct, and to blame her for the very actions for which he had often commended her. All those horrors which a lively imagination knows to raise, when any thing appears to have lessened the regard of those to whom it is attached, took possession of her mind.

In this disposition it was that she quitted the parlour, after the conversation I have related, betwixt Conway and her. The moment she entered her own chamber, she flung herself on her knees, and gave full vent to her tears—"Let me
" die

“die—let me die, merciful Heaven,” cried she; “cut me off, if it be thy will, in the midst of happiness; but in thine, infinite Goodness avert from me the sight of his indifference!” In this afflicted state she remained a long time, till having given way to the violence of her grief, it gradually subsided into a more tranquil state: and reflection in some degree resumed its usual power over her mind.

“After all,” said she, “perhaps I do him an injustice—perhaps I did speak with too much asperity of Lady Gay-thorne? But then I never before remember Conway retort so sharply upon me. However, to show that I resent his conduct, even if it should

“ spring from the motive I at first ima-
“ gined, will but accelerate the moment
“ of total indifference. No! let me ap-
“ pear with a brow devoid of suspicion,
“ nor imitate him by fullness, reserve,
“ or complaints, to seek for the smiles,
“ and the loves, in any face but her’s
“ who has so long long looked to his
“ *will* as the law of her actions, to his
“ *love* as her only hope of felicity in this
“ state of being.” After these reflec-
tions she went, with a heart somewhat
more composed, to the nursery; she
kissed with maternal tenderness each of
her children; but on the face of lit-
tle Henry, which beamed forth the
soul of his father, she could not re-
frain from dropping a tear, inspired by
more impassioned feelings. By these effu-
sions

sions she had much lightened her heart before she reached the parlour, which she approached with a soul, though pensive, full of benevolence and kindness to every human creature.

But we confess a little of this tranquillity gave way, when on opening the door she saw Lady Gaythorne and Conway seated together, with that sort of expression in their looks that denoted they had been deeply engaged in conversation. She exerted herself to hide, and to suppress this emotion; but a chillness, and a sinking at her heart, discovered to her that she had not philosophised away the feelings with which she had quitted the room.

Mrs. Conway, however, enquired with politeness respecting her Ladyship's indisposition; and, before this subject of conversation ended, Needham and Sir Henry entered.

"Well, Mr. Needham," cried Matilda, attempting to hide her design under an air of liveliness; "Did any new disaster arise after we left you?"

"Nothing at all worth relating after what you saw, Madam."

"They have quite overcome their mortification then, I hope."

"Oh! yes, entirely; for before we came

"came away, they were talking of
"going to the review, to-morrow."

"Lord!" said Lady Gaythorne, "I
"dare say that was because we spoke of
"of it, you know, and said we intended
"going."

"Very probably," said Needham,
"that might increase their desire of go-
"ing.—Mr. Williams has promised to
"send for a chaise to carry them to the
"field."

"Well, I am heartily rejoiced we
"came away before they talked of their
"expedition, for perhaps we should have
"been obliged to have asked some of
"them to have gone with us; and I

“ am sure, another day spent with any
“ part of that family, would infallibly
“ remove me from this state of ex-
“ istence.”

As Sir Harry and Mr. Conway said they should go on horse-back, Mrs. Conway observed, they could then make room for Mrs. Neville in the carriage, if it was agreeable to Lady Gaythorne.” “ Oh! by all means, madam; I am sure she is a very quiet agreeable person.” Mrs. Conway accordingly sent the next morning, to let Mrs. Neville know, that if she would do them the favour of accompanying them, they would call upon her, and take her to the review. To this invitation they received a note
from

from Mrs. Neville, expressing her concern that she was engaged to go with another party.

The case was this, the Williams's, who (though they had been mortified to the quick by seeing Mrs. Neville so much careffed by the Conways, &c. and longed for an opportunity of teasing her), were not so blind to their own interest, but they could do some violence to their feelings when that was concerned. And this motive suggested to them, that it might recommend them to Mrs. Conway, to behave with a degree of respect to Mrs. Neville, and that a contrary conduct might disgust her. As they had owned at Mrs. Conway's, that Miss Williams had been at

the same school with Mrs. Neville, it was resolved unanimously, "that they
" should visit her, and tell her, they
" did not recollect her person the evening they met her at Mrs. Conways;
" and, that they had never heard her
" name mentioned since she had changed
" it; but, that the moment they were
" informed she was Miss Markland,
" Miss Williams's school-fellow, they
" had determined to solicit the pleasure
" of a renewal of her acquaintance."

They accordingly went the next morning, and invited her to go to the review with them; with a previous resolution, however, that if she accepted their offer, they would do all in their power to wound her pride and her sensibility

fibility when they got her amongst them, to make themselves amends for going to seek her acquaintance, which they thought an humiliation.

But to return to the conversation:—

“ Well, Mr. Needham,” said Matilda,
“ I hope you will now no longer plead,
“ that folly reigns with greater power
“ among the higher, than the middle
“ class of people, but will confess that
“ every station has its own follies.”

“ But the follies of the Williams’s
“ are not the follies of their station;
“ Madam, they are follies copied from
“ the destructive examples of higher
“ life; where we see a man of a thou-
“ sand a year, imitating in his dress, in
“ his

“ his house, in his stile of living, the
“ man of five thousand.” “ Most truly
“ said,” cried Matilda; “ let my for-
“ tune be what it will, may my esta-
“ blishment never exceed it.”

“ One might discover, Madam,” re-
turned Sir Harry, “ that you had been
“ lately in town, by your having adopt-
“ ed the fashionable phrase, *establissh-*
“ *ment*. For ever since the Prince of
“ Wales has had an establishment, every
“ prim maiden gentlewoman, who can
“ just afford to keep a male and female
“ servant, has talked of her *establissh-*
“ *ment*; 'tis almost as ANNOYING, as
“ was the foolish phrase, BORE, which
“ that lively dramatick writer, Mrs.
“ Cowley,

“ Cowley, has now almost driven out
“ of the town.”

“ I understand your allusion,” said
Needham, “ the expression, *bore*, has
“ given place to one equally disgusting;
“ for the soul of folly is immortal,
“ though the form in which it appears
“ is eternally changing. A young
“ man of fashion, with whom I was
“ conversing a day or two before I left
“ town, told me, he had been riding
“ in Hyde Park the whole of the morn-
“ ing, and that he found the dust and
“ the sun *annoying* to the last degree;
“ he had met Lady Bridget Sparkle,
“ who had done nothing but *annoy* him
“ with an account of her own repartees;
“ he longed to go out of town, for now
“ the

“ the parliament had broken up, he
“ should be *annoyed* to death with seeing
“ every body leave it; but, that he de-
“ tested the idea of going into the
“ country, for his father had insisted
“ upon his spending the best part of the
“ summer with him, and the old man
“ was positively the greatest *annoyance*
“ he knew in the world.”

“ What a strange Gothic creature
“ you are,” said Lady Gaythorne, “ you
“ approve nothing that other people do;
“ nothing that is fashionable; I should
“ like to have you punished, by being
“ forced, this fine evening, to sit down
“ to whist, and confined to the card-
“ table till morning appeared.”

“ That

"That could be no punishment, were
"your Ladyship likewise confined
"there."

"There is a compliment for you,
"Lady Gaythorne," said Mr. Conway,
"your charms, you see, can make
"even an *Apemantus* flatter."

"When Vulcan offered nectar to
"Venus, the merry Gods laughed a-
"round," cried Sir Harry, gaily.

"Suppose we put his gallantry to the
"test," said Conway, touching the
bell. "Pray do, pray do, Mr. Con-
"way," said Lady Gaythorne, and he
immediately rung it.

Mrs.

Mrs. Conway who sat out, chanced to place herself opposite to Needham, who, to gratify Lady Gaythorne's wish, was her partner, and who, to keep up their idea of his dislike to cards, seemed to be endeavouring to assume a satisfaction he did not feel: the feint had a ludicrous effect when opposed to the character he assumed, and much entertained the whole company. They played with spirit, but the fortune of the game turned against Needham; he was rallied upon his ill luck.

Matilda, from a wish of not appearing to Conway low-spirited or out of temper, had roused her spirits beyond their natural tone, and there was a momentary wildness, and an excess of gaiety in her countenance,

countenance, whilst she overlooked the card-table, that Conway remarked with surprize, and imputed to a wrong motive. He had never before seen her, after any dispute between them, so lively, so unembarrassed, or so soon appear to have forgotten their disagreement.— He was mortified that his want of temper had not power to make a longer impression on her mind. He recollected with disgust what Lady Gaythorne had said respecting Needham; and the thought started into his head, how strange soever it may seem to a dispassionate observer, that she had met him in the garden; had mentioned to him what had passed, and that he had advised her not to appear to be hurt by his behaviour, but to pique him by inattention.

tion. When we once admit suspicions injurious to those we love, into what fatal extremes do they sometimes hurry us; the bitterest malice of an enemy often does less injury.

Conway had fixed these thoughts so firmly in his head, that he began mentally to comment with infinite severity on the conduct of a woman, who could to a third person mention the faults of a husband she pretended to love, from any motive whatever, and agitated himself to that degree, that he knew not a card he played. When they were alone he took no notice of what had passed, but treated her with a coolness and reserve, that cut her to the heart. She chose not to renew the subject however, knowing

ing that attempting to explain, or to remark upon, past disagreements, often served but to renew them and create fresh animosity, concluding, that if Conway's affection for her was still the same, his reserve would wear off of itself without a formal reconciliation.

In some positions of Conway's mind she would have hit upon a fortunate mode of conduct; but in the present it was the worst she could have adopted. It gave strength to his suspicions.

When we consider how much man varies from himself at different periods of his existence, how vain appears the endeavour to reduce the art of pleasing to a system. The random glance of an
eye;

eye; the casual movement of a feature, a soft inflexion of the voice, an epithet fortunately chosen, shall mock the laboured attempts of real affection, though guided by Wisdom and Virtue.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

NEEEDHAM and Mrs. Conway happened to be the first who made their appearance in the breakfast-room the next morning. Whilst they waited for the assembling of the rest of the company, Mrs. Conway apologizing to Needham, called for pens and ink, in order to write a note: wanting a seal, and not having her watch about her, Needham begged her to make use of an antique engraved gem he wore on his finger. Having sealed her note, she took notice of the extreme beauty of the impress, and after looking on it some little time, returned

turned it to Needham just as Conway happened to pass by the window. He saw them, engaged as he thought, in an earnest conversation:—he was alarmed. “She has so high an opinion of his wisdom,” said he, “she is certainly receiving his instructions how to act.” With this idea, which gave a deep wound to his pride and his sensibility, he entered the room.

“Have the goodness,” said Matilda, as he came in, “Mr. Needham, to shew the ring to Mr. Conway, he will be charmed with it.” He looked at it. “You are very happy in being the possessor of so rare a gem, it has an infinity of merit.” After holding it a few minutes in
his

his hand, he returned it to Needham, with an air that shewed he declined conversation.

Just then entered to them Lady Gaythorne; Conway flew to place her a chair, and when she had seated herself, he determined, as he thought Matilda had begun to assume indifference, to retaliate upon her.

He leant his arm over the back of her Ladyship's chair, and enquired how she did, with an inflexion of voice of the most engaging kind; and, in order to amuse her, asked Needham for the ring, and began to comment on the excellence of the design and execution. This, though in itself no more than a

common action, appeared in a stronger light to Matilda, when she contrasted it with the coldness and reserve in his manner, before Lady Gaythorne entered; she thought it betrayed a design to pique her.

Lady Gaythorne seemed to enjoy these attentions, as proofs of her conquest, and, by a thousand little affectations, shewed her triumph.

Just at this instant it was that the servant returned, as I have before related, with a note from Mrs. Neville, declining the invitation to go with them to the review, having yielded to the excessive importunities of the Williams's.

“You

"You will not have the company of
"your favourite, she is pre-engaged,"
said Mrs. Conway, turning to Need-
ham.

"Oh! I am sure Mr. Needham can
"never regret the absence of any one,
"when Mrs. Conway is present," cried
Lady Gaythorne.

There appeared in these words, to all
but Mr. and Mrs. Conway, nothing
more than a common-place compli-
ment; and even they put different con-
structions upon them. The former sup-
posed them to have reference to the con-
versation they had had the preceding
evening. The latter as an expression of
pique at her imagining any great addi-

tion could be made by Mrs. Neville, to the pleasure of any one of the male part of the company, when her Ladyship was of the party.

From several little hints of this kind; in the course of the day, Conway could not help suspecting, at some moments, that Lady Gaythorne knew, or at least conjectured, more than she had said to him, respecting Needham and Mrs. Conway.

The fear, however, of doing Matilda an injustice, made him overcome himself, so far as to prevent him from leading to a conversation with her Ladyship, that might give her room to apprehend

prehend, he believed Matilda capable of a mean and indelicate action.

They had company to dine with them that day, who staid till the evening, so that the Conways had little opportunity of conversing apart, till the family had retired for the night.

Matilda still maintained her resolution of not appearing to notice any alteration in Conway's behaviour, lest he should impute her remarks to jealousy. A conduct, which, though it sprung from the best motive in the world, was of all others the most powerfully calculated to keep alive the ideas Lady Gaythorne's suggestions had given birth to.

C H A P. III.

THE day following they went to the review; Sir Harry and Mr. Conway on horseback, Needham with the ladies in the carriage. When they had been on the Heath some little time, Needham looking out saw some person in a post-chaise at a distance bowing to them, he pointed out the chaise to Lady Gaythorne and Mrs. Conway, they had no sooner returned one bow than another demanded an acknowledgment, and so on to the amount of six or seven.

“ Good God!” cried Needham, “ for
“ Heaven’s sake! how many are there?
“ the heads pop up one after another as
“ unex-

“ unexpectedly as the children make their
“ appearance, crawling out of the great
“ Harlequin Leg in the Pantomime of
“ Robinson Crusoe.”—“ It is the Wil-
“ liams’s,” cried Mrs. Conway, “ and
“ I do believe I espy Mrs. Neville
“ amongst them !—Poor thing, she must
“ be fainting.—I wish we could relieve
“ her from so terrible a situation.”

“ I am really concerned for her,”
said Needham. “ Lord,” cried Lady
Gaythorne, “ how could she trust her-
“ self amongst them ?—I am sure if they
“ had me in their power but one day,
“ they’d absolutely petrify me to death.”
“ There would be no great danger of
“ it,” returned Needham, “ if they put
“ you in the midst of half a dozen of
C 4 “ them

“ them in a post-chaise in the middle of
“ summer.”

“ Lord! Needham, what an oddity
“ you are! Well then, they would suf-
“ focate me to death—something or
“ other, I am sure, they would do, suf-
“ ficient to put me out of the world.”

Just then they saw some of the chaise
ladies get out, and place themselves
near the General, amongst whom was
Mrs. Neville. After some time, “ We
“ could make room for your friend,”
said Lady Gaythorne, “ but then it will
“ be a shocking thing to take her from
“ her company, will it not, Madam? And
“ really having any one of that horrid
“ family

“family among us, would annoy us
“past all endurance.”

“They must be very unreasonable indeed,” said Mrs. Conway, “if they
“are offended at our relieving the poor
“Lady from so disagreeable a situation; for my own part, I would
“readily hazard their displeasure—but
“as the horses are from the carriage,
“how can we get to her? And, perhaps,
“if we send a servant, those
“people will persuade her to stay with
“them.”—“I will go,” said Mr. Needham,
“with all my heart, if you think
“I can prevail upon her to come to
“you.”

“ He went, and presently returned,
“ leading Mrs. Neville.

After they had seated themselves, and Mrs. Conway had enquired of Mrs. Neville, how she did, with the politest attention; Lady Gaythorne suddenly exclaimed, “ Lord ! Mrs. Neville, how
“ could you venture yourself amongst
“ those people ? are not you dead ? ”

“ When they came to make the invitation,” returned she, “ I wished
“ to have declined accepting it, for one
“ or two reasons, (though I did not
“ then know the manner in which we
“ were to be conveyed here), but they
“ importuned me so strongly, that my
“ father

“ father thought it would give offence
“ to them if I refused, and as he has
“ a great esteem for Mr. Williams, I
“ would not displease him by not accept-
“ ing their apparently civil request.
“ When the chaise came to fetch me
“ from the hill, there was only Miss Wil-
“ liams in it, and I had not the least idea
“ of the number we were to take up
“ at the Vicarage; however, disagree-
“ able and uncomfortable as was my
“ situation amongst them, it was ren-
“ dered worse by their conversation,
“ which consisted of a string of imperti-
“ nent questions, which I displeased
“ them by not chusing to answer with
“ any degree of communicative loqua-
“ city.”

On their return home, they had not proceeded above a quarter of a mile, before the coach was obliged to halt on account of a great croud on the road which obstructed its way, and surrounded a chaise which had broken down; inquiring into the matter, they found this to be the identical vehicle that had contained the Williams's, one or two of whom were much hurt. It was impossible for either of the ladies to make their way to them, but Mr. Needham got out, in order to give them what assistance might lay in his power. He came back to them in a few minutes, and told them he had found Mrs. Williams much hurt, as likewise one of her daughters; the rest, he said, were terribly frightened, but seemed more hurt by the sneers of the

the foot passengers (who diverted themselves with wondering how the family could all have squeezed themselves into the chaise) than at the situation of their mother and sisters. Mrs. Conway and Mrs. Neville seemed much concerned for the disagreeable and painful accident which had happened, notwithstanding their dislike to the people; and Lady Gaythorne, after some minutes consideration, asked Needham if they were near any house in which they could stay till the carriage could return from taking home the Williams's?

"I see one at a few yards distance, by the road side," said Needham.

"Oh!

“ Oh ! I cannot go there,” exclaimed Mrs. Conway, “ the next house, when we have passed that, I know, will be open to us, but *that* is shut against *me*.”

Needham, who had been told her father would not see her, on account of her having married contrary his inclinations, guessed immediately this to be the place of his residence, from the agitated manner in which she spoke, and after the Williams's had been put into the carriage, was for leading Lady Gaythorne to the house Mrs. Conway had recommended. But her Ladyship declared she could not walk a step further than to the house in view, without fainting away; Mrs. Conway then said: “ There is a little bench hid
“ amongst

“ amongst some shrubs in the front of
“ the house, on which I will sit till the
“ carriage returns, I shall be screened
“ from the sun, and that is all I require:
“ do you, Mr. Needham, conduct Lady
“ Gaythorne to the house.” They
opened the garden door, Matilda went
and placed herself on the seat she had
described, and Needham led Lady Gay-
thorne towards the building, an old-
fashioned mansion, which seemed to
have belonged to a family of some conse-
quence, and to which they approached
by a long gravel walk.

Mr. Needham knocked at the door;
and a maid-servant looked out at a
window and demanded their business,
whilst they could just espy the head of a
man

man in a woollen night-cap peeping behind her. Mr. Needham, in as few words as possible told the accident that had happened, and requested admittance for the lady: at which the woman turned from the window and seemed to be in conversation with the person behind the curtain. At length, however, they heard a voice calling to the maid, who was then apparently descending the stairs, "Put them into the great parlour; "and do you hear, mind that you open "that window next the garden, least those "confounded window-tax collectors "should have any spy about."

At last the maid reached the hall-door, and having unlocked and unbolted it, they

they entered and were shewed into a dark parlour, which, however, the servant soon illuminated by opening the window as her master had ordered her. Here they sat for some minutes, when the master of the house appeared to them, his head covered with a woollen night-cap, his body cloathed in a long gown of green baize, belted with a leathern girdle.

When they entered into conversation, he inquired who the parties were who had been overturned, and on being told, the family of the Reverend Mr. Williams, he broke out into the most violent invectives against them, accusing them of the most extreme extravagance, pride, folly, and dissipation, and did not scruple to pronounce their recent disaster a punish-

a punishment inflicted on them by Providence for their imprudent conduct and rage for amusement ; for Mr. Seymour, though he had not for many years visited in the neighbourhood, knew the history and transactions of every family in it from his servant. “ And after all,” continued he, “ this Mrs. Williams, I find, “ was formerly only a servant ; but women servants now-a-days are the most “ extravagant wretches in the world, for “ which reason I have turned off all “ mine except one, and though she is “ better than the generality, she is by “ no means what I could wish her to “ be. Do you know, it was but yesterday I came upon her suddenly, and I “ found the hussy washing her neck “ with oat-meal : yes, I assure you, “ wasting



“wasting as much oat-meal about her
“fine white neck, forsooth, as would have
“made messes of gruel for half the poor
“people in the parish.” Needham could
not help smiling internally at some
parts of this conversation, and to change
the subject, said, “You seem Sir to have
“an extremely good house.” “You shall
“see it if you please, Sir,” returned he,
“and some pictures which are esteemed
“excellent.” Upon which he immediately
conducted them up stairs, and calling
the maid, they overheard him whisper
her, to order the man who was
working in the garden (for he did not
keep a gardner to sleep in the house, in
order to avoid paying the servant tax,)
to go home for a little time and lock
the gate of the garden in which the fruit

was :

was : " For if they should take it into
" their heads to walk there, they'll ex-
" pect me to offer them some fruit, and
" there is no occasion to give one's things
" away to strangers.

Needham and Mrs. Neville were too well amused, however, with the pictures, and Lady Gaythorne too languid for either of them, to wish to walk in the garden, till they were told the coach was come back ; when thanking Mr. Seymour for the reception he had given them they joined Mrs. Conway and proceeded to the garden-gate, where the carriage waited for them.

" What pity it is," said Lady Gaythorne when they were seated, " that
" old

“ old gentleman makes such a horrid
“ spectacle of himself ; he really looks
“ like an old hermit just emerged from
“ his cave. If he would go more into
“ the world and dress better, I protest
“ he would be quite as endurable as
“ most of the people I have seen since I
“ came into the country ; for I really
“ think he does not make a great noise,
“ and people who live always in the
“ country are apt to get a loud bustling
“ way that annoys one dreadfully.”

And now, whilst they are compleating
their ride home to dinner, let me finish
this Chapter with a short history of the
Father of Mrs. Conway, and I will en-
deavour as nearly as possible to give it in

the

the words in which she in confidence related it to me, her most intimate friend.

“ My mother died,” said Matilda,
“ when I was extremely young; so
“ young, that I have no recollection of
“ her person. My grand-mother, very
“ much to my father’s satisfaction, as it
“ spared him the expence and trouble of
“ my education, took the care of me
“ till her death, which happened when
“ I was about fourteen years old. She
“ had provided me proper masters in
“ the different branches of female education, and her own conduct and precepts were my best instructors in the
“ religion of my ancestors and my
“ country. On the death of this respectable parent, a sister of my mother’s,

“ther’s, who had many years before,
“against the solicitations of all her
“friends, abjured the Protestant reli-
“gion, and taken the veil in the con-
“vent of ———, wrote to request he
“would place me under her protection.
“This proposal my father likewise a-
“greed to, as he thought he should
“keep me there at less expence than at
“an English boarding-school, and amidst
“all his parsimony he had still so much
“of the pride of a gentleman, as to
“wish me to differ from the vulgar in
“my mind and manners.

“Under the tuition of my amiable
“aunt, Sister Agnes, (to whose care I
“am indebted for the cultivation of
“those seeds of virtue nature had im-
“planted

“ planted in my breast, and for calling
“ forth those talents she had bestowed),
“ I lived till the age of eighteen, when
“ my father recalled me to my native
“ country. As since the death of my mo-
“ ther (the only person of either sex
“ to whom he had ever shewn the small-
“ est attachment) his natural dislike to
“ society had increased, and he now
“ lived wholly in solitude, Lady H—,
“ his sister, offered to introduce me to
“ the world; she had lately become a
“ widow, resided the greatest part of the
“ year in town, and saw an infinity of
“ gay and fashionable people. At her
“ house I became acquainted with Mr.
“ Conway, who was a frequent and
“ favourite visitor of her Ladyship, who
“ had for him the highest respect, and
“ thinking

“ thinking she saw in him a similarity
“ of disposition to mine, encouraged
“ *his* attentions to *me*, and my partiality
“ to his merits. My father, however,
“ mean while, received proposals of
“ marriage for me, from a gentleman of
“ much larger fortune than Mr. Con-
“ way’s, and insisted upon my renoun-
“ cing all thoughts of an union with the
“ latter, protesting that if we married
“ he would never leave me a single shil-
“ ling. Lady H—, who had suffered
“ herself, from the same cause, inveigh-
“ ed, in the bitterest terms, against this
“ tyrannical abuse of paternal power.
“ Conway then said, there was only one
“ way by which we could evade its ef-
“ fects, his fortune would be sufficient,
“ without living to the extent of it, to

“ furnish us in the country with the com-
“ forts, the conveniencies, and even some
“ of the elegancies of life. He exagger-
“ rated the merit of the sacrifice I should
“ make by renouncing a world, of which
“ his partiality made him fancy I was
“ one of the most brilliant ornaments, to
“ domesticate in the country. For a time
“ the thought of becoming a portionless
“ wife to a man whose ancestors had re-
“ duced the family estate to a bare
“ third of its original value, appeared
“ to me an act of imprudence and in-
“ justice, and made me oppose an over-
“ ture which my heart ardently wished
“ accomplished; quitting the gay
“ world would, to me, have been but
“ a matter of small importance, had a
“ common motive been my inducement
“ for

“ for leaving it, but to withdraw from it
“ for the society of Conway, my heart
“ bounded at the thought.

“ The never-ceasing sollicitations of
“ Conway, which were seconded by La-
“ dy H—, at length conquered my
“ every scruple. We went, soon after
“ our marriage to throw ourselves at the
“ feet of my father, but the moment our
“ names were announced, he sent word,
“ that he did not wish to receive visits
“ from such poor guests. We have not
“ since had courage to repeat our visit.”



C H A P. IV.

THE adventures of the day served them for conversation at dinner time. Soon after the ladies had withdrawn from table, Needham followed them to the drawing-room. Lady Gaythorne complained of excessive fatigue from the heat of the day, and Mrs. Conway recommended it to her to endeavour to compose herself to sleep for an hour or two: her Ladyship said she would take her advice, and ringing for her woman to attend her, retired for that purpose. As soon as she had left the room, Mrs. Conway, who was desirous of knowing how her neighbours, the Williams's, were, after their terrible accident, asked

Needham

Needham and Mrs. Neville if they would accompany her in calling on them. Needham and Mrs. Neville expressed their desire of going, and they set out.

A few minutes after their departure, Sir Harry declined taking any more wine, and complained of a violent pain in his head, which he imputed to riding in the sun, during the heat of the day, and begging his friend to excuse him, went into an adjoining apartment, in order to throw himself on a sofa.

Conway went to the drawing-room, in expectation of finding the ladies there, and inquiring of a servant where they

were, they were, he was told, “ gone a
“ walking.”

He now looked about for the last new comedy, which he had seen laying in in that room before dinner, but not finding it he went to Mrs. Conway's apartment, thinking she might have carried it there; he was disappointed in his search; but returning past Lady Gaythorne's dressing-room, imagining her Ladyship to be gone out, he stepped in to see if she had taken it away. He opened the door, and instantly perceived it laying on the toilet; he took it up, and stood for a minute looking into it, but turning about to go out of the room, his eye caught, from the looking-glass, the reflection of Lady Gaythorne's figure, laying

laying on the sofa at the bottom of the room; he turned round, "God
" bless me! I beg your Ladyship's par-
" don, but I really thought you were
" gone out with the rest of the ladies;
" and I came here for this play, to amuse
" myself in your absence." "Are they
" gone out?" said she; "I did not
" know it: what have you done with
" Sir Harry?"

"He complained of a head-ache, and
" wished to be alone."

"I was reading a little of that play,"
said Lady Gaythorne, "this morning, I
" never saw it acted, and there was one
" passage I did not rightly understand.

“ If you'll give me leave I'll show it
“ you ?”

He brought the book, and whilst she turned over the leaves, sat down on a chair near her, and could not help making her Ladyship whose form he had never seen appear to greater advantage, the subject of his contemplations. To favour her repose, she had been undressed, and had thrown over her a robe de chambre of the finest chintz, which, being made extremely wide and long, fell in the most graceful folds, and gave that fullness to her figure, which her tall stature required. Her locks, which, by the aid of her hair-dresser, appeared extremely luxuriant, hung, according to the fashion

tion of the day, to the bottom of her waist, giving a picturesque air to her whole appearance.

Rouffeau, in his "Confessions," tells us, the girls who drew his attention most towards them, were not always the handsomest. "It was rather those who
" had the most of delicacy and languor
" in their air and deportment; the soft-
" est voices, the whitest hands; who
" wore the finest linen, and the best
" fancied colours." The fact is, that an air of luxury, an excess of softness, often aids the empire of the senses more than the most finished beauty, where these are not possessed in a pre-eminent degree. Female sprightliness and spirit give an idea of something to

be overcome—a city in the height of power and glory, not to be reduced but with danger and difficulty. Female inactivity, softness, and languor, remind us of a city which luxury and effeminacy have rendered incapable of defending itself, ready to fall an easy conquest to the first invader. In manners of this last cast, there is nothing that puts us in mind of resistance, and though opposition in many cases serves but to increase the fury of the passions, it is when they have passed far beyond their natural limits; for, in the beginning of their progress, it sometimes gives them a check, which answers the salutary purpose of forcing them back to their proper channel.

Perhaps

Perhaps from a female endowed with the most regular beauty, adorned with every sprightly air that gaily dances in the train of the graces, who added to these the wit and the spirit of Minerva, the feeling, the elegant Matilda would have had little to have dreaded. Amidst the blaze of such charms, the constancy of Conway might have remained unshaken; whilst from Lady Gaythorne, whose understanding was of the meanest order, whose temperament was the coldest, and whose mind was never agitated save by the desire of admiration, she had every thing to fear. Her attention, though proceeding from the most contemptible motive, flattered; because it appeared an effort in favour of a particu-

lar object, a triumph over her native indolence.

But to return from this long digression. I left her Ladyship turning over the leaves of the comedy. "I protest," said she, "I beg your pardon, but I cannot find it now." "I have been agreeably employed," returned he, "in marking the effect of that undress: I never saw you look better in the most studied habit. It proves the truth of the elegant though hackneyed quotation:

"Beauty when unadorn'd 's adorn'd the most."

"Do you really think this dishabille becoming?"

"Indeed,

“ Indeed I think you look elegant!
“ charming! to a high degree, and that
“ this would be a happy minute for our
“ fair painter to catch the form of her
“ Helen.”

“ Lord, I wish she were here if you
“ are of that opinion;—and I declare I
“ think your countenance has infinitely
“ more of the proper spirit of Paris, than
“ when we sat in form at Mr. Neville’s;
“ but you ought to sit here;—and should
“ lean just so—your head a little more
“ against the back—there, that is just
“ as she placed you.—Now I ought to
“ stand in this attitude,” said she, leaving
the sofa, and placing herself in
the position the painter had chosen,
“ as having been led to you by Venus.”

The

The wine Conway had drank had heated his brain—there was an alluring naivete in her manner that appeared at that moment seducing: “Charming,” cried he, “you enter into the spirit of the “scene,” and from personating a character himself, he really began to feel it. He involuntarily started from his seat, and placed her on the sofa.

“Lord!” said she, “if any one was “to see this, they would think us mad, “or worse.” “There are some people” said he, “ready to misconstrue every “innocent frolick.”

“So they do, but I protest I am all “ways of opinion; if we think no harm, “we then do no wrong.”

“Enchanting

“Enchanting simplicity,” cried he,
“I never saw a creature so inspired by
“the Graces.” “You do not think so
“in sincerity,” replied she.

“I do, by the hand of Venus, of which
“this is the most finished model.” “You
“must not kiss my hand:—positively
“I shall be obliged to turn you out of
“the room.”

She *said*, “I must turn you out of
“the room,” but she *did* not repel the
first advances to familiarity; and Conway,
like the frogs in the fable, might have
exclaimed, “this is but amusement to
“you, to me it is death.” His reason
became the slave of his senses. He for-
got

got what he owed to the best affections of the heart, to honour, and to duty.

Lady Gaythorne saw he was not to be intimidated, but by exposure; the allurements she had at first practised, were only intended to try the power of her own charms on a heart that thought itself inviolably attached to another object; whether her Ladyship had approached too near a flame she had fanned to consume another; or reflected that sacrifices to vanity, or to passion, may be sometimes made by the wedded fair, and without discovery, and in her case thought it would be better to save the parties nearest concerned an infinity of inquietude, and herself the fatigue and trouble of further resistance, by desisting from opposition,

opposition, I pretend not to determine, but like Herodotus, hold myself bound to relate all I have heard, and the fact is, if she *resisted* she did not *conquer*.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

THE return of the ladies and Needham obliged them to separate. Conway quitted the house by a back door, and walked, without stopping, till he had got to a good distance from it, his soul torn by a chaos of painful sensations; the momentary illusion of the senses was passed, in every breeze he heard the voice of Matilda breathing the reproaches he felt he merited, and, in imagination, beheld her wounded and delicate spirit, sinking under the weight of disappointed affection, and painting its sufferings

sufferings on her mild and dejected aspect. Injured friendship now seemed roll its awful thunders on his ears; and his quickened fancy imagined its keen indignant glances, which, piercing as the elementary fires, glared before his sight. Even the playful gambols of the fish, as he crossed the canal by a turf walk, that led to a grove of aged elms, caused him to start, with a sensation of terror he had scarcely ever before experienced on any occasion. He flew to the thickest covert of the grove, but it could not hide from him the sight of his own conduct; he remained there, in a state almost approaching to despair, till the shades of night began to fall. He returned with a pace the most reverse from that with which he had hasted thither,

thither, his tardy steps were long, very long, in conducting him to that habitation, which he had never before approached but with extreme eagerness. He drew near to the back part of the house, whilst there was yet light enough for him to discern through the grated window of the nursery a little head nodding to him, and presently heard two or three soft voices calling out, "We are going to bed, Papa; good-night."

Conway, waving his hand, uttered "Good-night;" mentally adding,— "Peace to your slumbers, sweet innocents, though sorrow and self-reproach imbitter mine." He proceeded to the parlour, where he found Sir Harry alone.

"I have

“ I have been seeking you all over
“ the grounds,” were the first words he
uttered to Conway. The change which
took place in the countenance of the lat-
ter during their utterance may be con-
ceived, for “ Guilt makes cowards of
“ us all.” It was so striking, that it
could not have escaped the eyes of Sir
Harry, had not the dusky evening veil-
ed it from his sight.

“ A melancholy affair has happened,”
continued Sir Harry; “ Mrs. Conway
“ was sent for, soon after she came home,
“ to her father who had been taken sud-
“ denly ill. She hastened to his house;
“ but, before she had reached it, he had
“ breathed his last. She is alone in her
“ own apartment, and requested you might
“ be

“ be sent to her the moment you came
“ in.” Conway quitted the parlour instantly, and went to the chamber of Matilda. He found her in a melancholy posture, impatiently waiting his return. Accustomed to confide every thought of her heart to his breast, she looked for the moment of his arrival as the moment of relief, as it would afford her an opportunity of pouring out her sorrows to one whose heart, whose affections, whose manners, rendered him the fittest person in the world to soothe an oppressed spirit. The resentments of a good mind die away, when the objects of them are in a state of suffering; she knew the feelings of her own heart, and she had been accustomed to judge of the operations of Conway’s by her own. She
hoped

hoped that little reserve which had for a short time hung about him, would entirely vanish, when he knew how much real cause she had for uneasiness and vexation of mind. She had entirely forgiven him, and concluded, that though not intentionally she must have given him some cause of displeasure, and blamed herself for not having with openness inquired and insisted upon knowing in what she had offended him. She rose on his entrance and came towards him.

“ Oh, my dear Conway,” said she,
“ if you knew how violent a shock I
“ have sustained, I am sure you would
“ pity me, even though you did not
“ love

“ love me as you were used to love
“ me.”

“ I do know it,” returned he, “ I
“ pity thee from my soul, and I love
“ thee better than ever. Heaven knows,
“ how unworthy, how very unworthy I
“ hold myself of the possession of so in-
“ estimable a treasure.”

“ And does then your heart feel as
“ it used to do for me? Is there not
“ one atom of coldness in it towards
“ your own Matilda? And do you
“ know, Conway, my dear Conway, that
“ I am that portionless wife I feared I
“ should be.”

“ I do know it, my best love, and I
am

" am not, I swear I am not a jot the
" less happy on that account."

" You are the best, the most generous
" of men," said she, bursting into tears
on his neck. " But I—"

" Do not weep, do not distress thy
" sweet mind; indeed he was not a fa-
" ther to thee, he did not deserve those
" precious drops."

" When I got to his house," said Ma-
tilda, " he lay without sense or motion—
" he had been seized with an apoplectic
" fit, which put an end to his existence,
" notwithstanding every assistance had
" been administered under the direction
" of Dr. J——, whom the servant had

“ sent for on his first seizure. To find
“ him lifeless, and to know that he ex-
“ pired in a state of animosity with those
“ so near to him, and whom he ought
“ to have protected, shocked me more
“ than I can describe;—I still feel my
“ whole frame chilled by the effects of
“ the awful scene, yet will I never be
“ guilty of the hypocrisy of counterfeit-
“ ing a grief I do not feel—and which
“ would be an insult to you who have
“ been so unkindly, so unjustly treated
“ by him.—But, peace to his memory,
“ he was my father!”

“ Talk no more on the subject, my
“ dear Matilda,—we now know ap-
“ parently the worst of every thing,
“ respecting our worldly concerns;—we
“ can

“ can live as we have hitherto done, with-
“ out his assistance.—And have we not
“ been happy ?” His voice failed him;
he could add no more ; a reflection shot
across his mind, that put him on a rack.
“ Yes,” replied Matilda, “ we have,
“ we have indeed, but we will still be
“ happy. What shall prevent it ? It is
“ not in the power of fortune to decrease
“ or augment our comforts.—You bid
“ me talk no more on the subject ;—
“ but I must unburthen my heart, by
“ relating some particulars to you, dis-
“ agreeable as they are. When the
“ physician had pronounced him beyond
“ hope of recovery, his servant, and the
“ old man who was his gardener, who
“ were with him when he was taken for
“ death, and who were impatient to

“ know their fortune, told me the
“ bureau in which his will was depo-
“ sited. I recommended it to be opened
“ immediately, having once heard my
“ father say, he should insert in his *will*
“ some particulars relative to his fune-
“ ral. It was opened in the presence
“ of Dr. J—, Sir Harry, and Mrs. Eafil,
“ who had been kind enough to go with
“ me. He had appointed Dr. J—
“ and the Rev. Mr. Herbert his execu-
“ tors; our names, and those of our
“ children were unmentioned in the will.
“ There were a few trifling legacies,
“ among which were two, one of twenty,
“ the other of ten pounds a-year to his
“ female servant, and his gardener. The
“ remainder of his fortune, real and per-
“ sonal estates, bequeathed to St. Tho-
“ mas’s

“ mas’s Hospital, all his furniture, pictures, china, plate, &c. &c. to be sold and appropriated to the same purpose.”

“ Good God! how provoking,” exclaimed Conway, “ not to leave you so much as the pictures, not even the three Titians you were so fond of—nor the little box of antique gems: I have so often heard Lady H—— speak in raptures of.”

“ Conway, you astonish me,” said Matilda: “ you bear all this with amazing philosophy, you seem to feel nothing but as a man of taste.”

“ I have so long accustomed myself, Matilda, to expect nothing from that

“ quarter, that I do not feel as if I had
“ lost any thing ; therefore, there is
“ very little philosophy in my acquies-
“ cence ; though I confess I could not
“ help giving a short sigh to the pictures
“ and the box of gems.”

“ Mrs. Easil has but just left me :
“ I was much indebted to her for her
“ kind attention during the painful scene
“ I had to sustain.—Lady Gaythorne paid
“ me the compliment of sending to tell
“ me, she would attend me if her com-
“ pany would be agreeable.”

“ Did she ? Good God !” exclaimed
Conway involuntarily, “ had she presence
“ of mind enough to make the offer.”

“ Oh,

“ Oh, yes; but I declined the offer,
“ by saying, I feared her Ladyship’s
“ spirits would be too much overcome
“ by a sick-bed scene ;—and intreated
“ her not to think of going with me.”

The mention of this name filled Conway with the most entire confusion : his reflections on what had passed were renewed, (I speak improperly, for they had not ceased), they became more poignant. He lost himself in a painful reverie. Matilda looked at him for some minutes with extreme concern ; but she imputed his musing to a far different cause. “ Alas !” cried she, “ though you
“ talk it off with spirit, I see you cannot
“ avoid serious reflections on this most
“ mortifying subject. Ah, my poor
“ children !”

FEATURES FROM LIFE,

" Indeed I think not of it, Matilda,
" indeed I do not ; for different ideas
" occupied my mind at the moment
" you saw me involved in thought."

" But perhaps you think of a late un-
" fortunate misapprehension betwixt us,"
said Matilda.

" I do not, on my word, I do not.

" You will appear to Sir Harry and
" Lady G—— at supper," said Ma-
tilda, " me they will not expect to see."

" I will go to them," returned he,
if you think it necessary." But how
much happier would he have been not
to have seen them at all.

He

He took her hand, as he bade her adieu, and whilst he pressed it to his lips, which were cold and trembling, his own reflections, her pensive, though resigned countenance, her looks full of tenderness towards him, affected him to an extreme degree; a tear stole down his cheeks, like a drop of wintry rain, almost freezing as it fell. Matilda felt them on her hand.

"Oh, Conway, you deceive me!—
"you are unhappy. I have made you
"so, and myself the most wretched
"woman in the world."

"You are mistaken, on my honour
"you are; I feel not from the cause you
"imagine."

“ What then has happened to distress
“ you?” “ Nothing, nothing, let us
“ speak no more on this point ;—your
“ manner has affected me :—I was wrong
“ to let you perceive it ;—but believe
“ me the matter you suspect, on my
“ soul, touches me not at all.”

The heart of Conway, wont to confide all its uneasinesses to the faithful and tender breast of Matilda, was doubly pained by having a concealment from her ; he longed to kneel at her feet, to tell her the infatuation he had been under, and to solicit her pardon for the momentary infidelity. But a sense of honour, of generosity towards the partner of his guilt, kept him from revealing the fatal secret. He knew too
that

that the knowledge of it would give a stab to the peace of Matilda, that it was more than probable no time, no future conduct of his would ever be able totally to heal. There was a peculiar, a high-wrought delicacy of sentiment, deeply interwoven in the mind of Matilda.— Love, in its most refined and impassioned form, was the idol of her heart, and she had adopted the opinion, ever since she had felt the passion, that a heart which had once known the tender confidence, the fond reciprocations of a *real attachment*, was incapable of change, even for a moment; and that those who deviated from constancy, had never known a real flame, or had mistaken a transient meteor for a fixed star.

He was sensible that when her confidence in him had received the shock of such a discovery, it would be impossible to fix it again, but that, like a Pagan emerging from idolatry, she would banish from her presence the false image which had been so long imposed on her for the true God.

These sentiments had once been his own, and he felt that nothing but experience could have confuted them. He still adored the virtues, the graces of Matilda; his remaining hopes of happiness in this life he found still centered in her affection, in the domestic comforts of her society; his every feeling, his every hope then of future peace, of future joy, commanded him to be silent.

C H A P. VI.

THE next morning Sir Harry went out very early to spend the day with a gentleman who lived at a distance. During breakfast Conway's attentions to Matilda were unceasing, but he sometimes looked with a concern, even with a degree of tenderness, on Lady Gaythorne, who he still imagined had for him a particular regard; and there was a gratitude in his nature that would not permit him to see with indifference an object that had sacrificed to give him pleasure, though a transient pleasure and succeeded.

He was sensible that when her confidence in him had received the shock of such a discovery, it would be impossible to fix it again, but that, like a Pagan emerging from idolatry, she would banish from her presence the false image which had been so long imposed on her for the true God.

These sentiments had once been his own, and he felt that nothing but experience could have confuted them. He still adored the virtues, the graces of Matilda; his remaining hopes of happiness in this life he found still centered in her affection, in the domestic comforts of her society; his every feeling, his every hope then of future peace, of future joy, commanded him to be silent.

C H A P. VI.

THE next morning Sir Harry went out very early to spend the day with a gentleman who lived at a distance. During breakfast Conway's attentions to Matilda were unceasing, but he sometimes looked with a concern, even with a degree of tenderness, on Lady Gaythorne, who he still imagined had for him a particular regard; and there was a gratitude in his nature that would not permit him to see with indifference an object that had sacrificed to give him pleasure, though a transient pleasure and succeeded.

succeeded by so many painful sensations. Lady Gaythorne, only agitated by wounded vanity, could not refrain from glancing on him occasional looks of disapprobation that she was not the sole object of his attention.

The embarrassment, the irksome situation of Conway's mind, may be conceived, and was quickly discerned by Needham, who had before perceived what was going forward, and made it his business incessantly to remark the behaviour of Conway and Lady Gaythorne; resolved to make their errors, if possible, turn to his own advantage.

Matilda was less likely at this time than at any other to notice any peculiarity

ty in their manners, her own mind being more than commonly disposed to see every thing in the best view, so soothed was it by perceiving that reserve on the part of Conway, which had given her so much uneasiness, entirely worn off.

Whilst they sat chatting in a room in the front of the house, they saw Colonel St. Clare, who had a seat within a few miles of Mr. Conway's, driving his phaeton towards the house.

“ My spirits are so low,” said Mrs. Conway, “ I cannot see any but my own family ; will your Ladyship have the goodness to assist the gentlemen in entertaining the Colonel, and excuse my leaving the room.”

Lady

Lady Gaythorne bowed: and Mrs. Conway withdrew.

The Colonel entered in a few minutes, with the gayest air in the world. Having made his bows: "I hope Mrs. Conway is well," said he. "She is somewhat indisposed—a melancholy event has happened in the family, the death of a near relation." "I sympathize with her, I am truly concerned;" replied the Colonel. "My God, how charming is the disposition of those feathers in your Ladyship's hat: in short, I never saw any thing more enchantingly fancied than your whole dress. Is it not, Mr. Needham; is it not?"

Most

"Most admirable," returned he;—
"such a dress needs not the aid of ani-
"mated, living, glowing beauty, to set
"it off; it needs but to be seen in a
"fashionable assembly on the body of
"an automaton to do a world of exe-
"cution. How many men of fashion
"would be dying for the lovely in-
"fible?"

Lady Gaythorne, who did not perceive the sarcastic point in this speech, was delighted with it, and looked with an infinity of complacency on the deliverer and the drawer forth of it.

"You have made some improve-
"ments in this charming spot since I
"was

" was here, I think, Mr. Conway,"
said the Colonel.

" Shall I have the honour of your
" opinion of them?"

" Is the fun too high," said Colonel
St. Clare, " to suffer us to have the
" pleasure of your Ladyship's company
" in our walk?" " Oh, no: I think
" I could venture with an umbrella."
Conway rung the bell, an umbrella was
brought; which the Colonel held over
her head as they walked out of the house,
Conway and Needham following them.

Alas! Conway, who had suffered so
much the evening before, who had formed
so many just reflections, and so sincerely

cerely wished to keep them, having flattered himself with having made an impression on the heart of Lady Gaythorne, felt irritated at seeing her practice every little art which she had employed to seduce his attentions, on the Colonel; on whom, though for the moment they had the desired effect, they could make no dangerous impression, serving only to amuse the time as it elapsed.

Why did not this conduct, which opened the eyes of Conway, and showed him he had been the dupe of his own vanity, teach him a thorough contempt of his own weakness, and the woman who had practised on it? Must we confess?—We must, and with regret confess, for truth commands it, that mortification

fication at finding himself deceived, was the strongest sensation of his soul. He could not help expressing it verbally to her Ladyship, when they chanced to be at some little distance from Colonel St. Clare and Needham. "The Colonel is
" extremely happy, Madam, in the
" power of engrossing so much of your
" conversation."

" Yes," said she, with more sarcasm than he had believed in her character,
" yes, it is pleasant, I own, to have
" somebody near one who appears to
" know one is present."

" It relieves me from some anxiety,
" I assure your Ladyship," replied he
" with

with an air of pique, "to find that any
" one, who takes but a little pains in
" attempting to please you may suc-
" ceed. It is most fortunate for
" both of us: but I confess so sudden
" a transfer of regard is astonishing."

"I wonder you, of all people," re-
turned she, "should be surprised! you
" who are yourself so subject to sudden
" changes—but I hate reproaches, they
" are the most fatiguing things in the
" world." So saying, she turned
about to join the company. This beha-
viour, which ought to have increas-
ed his contempt, revived the deadened
embers of his former flame.

"This

“ This coldness, this insensibility must
“ be feigned.”

“ Why should you think so,” said
she, “ who have yourself so lately suffer-
“ ed as great a transformation? Are
“ your powers of charming, do you
“ imagine, more resistless than mine?
“ Do you think women feel less at be-
“ ing neglected than men?”

“ But did you really feel,” cried he,
“ the neglect you complain of?”

“ To be sure,” said Lady Gaythorne,
looking down with an air of affected sen-
sibility; for she saw there were hopes of
bringing him back to her chains, and
therefore began to re-practice some of
her

her former allurements. "Have I
" never given you reason to believe I
" should feel your neglect." "Alas!
" you have, you have indeed," said he,
" given me every proof in the world;
" and I was an idiot to believe your
" little jealous retaliation bespoke indif-
" ference." At this minute Colonel St.
Clare came into the walk, and they
turned from each other; just then Need-
ham appeared from behind a thicket,
and by a look, though he said not a
word, gave her Ladyship, who was a
few steps behind Conway, to understand
he had overheard their conversation.

She started, and was for some minutes,
in spite of her constitutional apathy,
greatly confused. He took no farther
notice,

notice, however, but began a conversation on an indifferent subject, which gave her time to recollect herself.

After some minutes silence, she looked as if by accident on a diamond ring she had on her finger, suddenly exclaiming, " Lord! how came I with this Gothick
" ring on my finger. I protested I
" would never wear it again. My mother, when she gave it me, desired I
" would not alter the setting of it, as I
" believe it had been her great-grandfather's. For my part I hate the sight
" of it."

" What folly," cried Needham, " to
" hate a thing in itself beautiful, because
" its

“ its appearance is not to the fashion of
“ the present day !”

“ Oh ! I know you doat upon every
“ thing that is antique. Do, for Hea-
“ ven’s sake take it; and do me the
“ great favour never to let me see it
“ again.”

“ But a family ring, Madam.”

“ Say no more, say no more, if you
“ would oblige me ; but take the fright-
“ ful thing out of my sight !”

Needham took the ring, bowed low,
and put it in his pocket, telling her “ she
“ was like all the handsome women he

“ had ever seen, full of folly and bad taste.”—Her Ladyship hoped she had secured his silence by her present, and as there was a compliment included in his reproach, she smiled, and called him “ an odd old-fashioned mortal.”

In this Lady Gaythorne did not differ from many women of superior understanding, who would at any time prefer a compliment to their beauty, before one paid to their wit or accomplishments.

They soon after returned to the house, and St. Clare mounted his phaeton and departed. Evening came; as it was a fine one, Conway, Lady Gaythorne, and Needham, agreed to take a walk;

Mrs.

Mrs. Conway declined going with them, and, as was her usual custom, went to the nursery, to see and bid adieu to her little ones before they went to rest.

F 2

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

LADY Gaythorne, as they strolled along, observed to Conway, that she had never been across the canal, and asked him if there were any walks cut through the trees she saw on the other side. He told her there was, and that it was his favourite place of walking when he was in a meditative mood.

“O! then I am sure I shall like it;
“take me to it; let me see it.”

He

He could do no less than conduct her thither. As they crossed the turf walk, she exclaimed, "How came you to take those strange caprices into your head about Colonel St. Clare? Could you not perceive; I only meant to act for your safety, to take off any suspicion. You understand me—I am sure, for my own part, if your safety was not concerned, I should be regardless of my own."

This proof, as he deemed it, of the strength of her attachment, again drew the veil over his eyes; he was again lost to every thing but a voluptuous sensation of gratitude for the warmth of her expressions. With this kind of conversation on her part, with those inflated feelings

on his, they walked towards the grove. Mean time, Needham, without their observing him, had taken another road, and having passed through a gate that led into a green lane, he met Sir Harry returning from his visit, who, on seeing Needham, dismounted, and gave his horse to the servant. When the man was got at a distance, "I am glad to have met you, Sir Harry," said Needham; "I wished much for a private conversation with you, though one of a most disagreeable nature." Sir Harry was alarmed at this prelude. "You may proceed, Sir," replied he, "I believe there is no one within hearing."

Needham then turning his eye on a favourite spaniel of Sir Harry's which
was

was following its master, called the servant back, desiring him to call off the dog, and take him home with him. Sir Harry could not help smiling at this preparation: "Dogs," said he, "though they may have sometimes more acute perceptions of things than many of the human species, have not the organ of speech to communicate them to others."

"You will not wonder at this precaution in a few minutes," returned Needham with a look of solemnity. The servant took the dog with him, and they once more returned into the lane. "You are naturally alarmed and astonished at so serious a prelude to what I am going to say."

F 4

"I am

" I am indeed, Sir, pray proceed."

Needham then, with great seeming concern, entered on the discovery he had made, related the conversation he had overheard, and the various observations he had made. Notwithstanding what Needham advanced, Sir Harry seemed not to credit what he had heard, but hoped, fondly hoped they had been suspected wrongfully, when, to deprive him of all doubts, Needham produced the ring; which he most solemnly avowed had been given him as a silent request for him to conceal his observations, and his suspicions of their correspondence. " Can it be possible that she gave it you?" cried Sir Harry.

" On

“On my soul she did,” replied Needham, “and for the purpose I have mentioned.”

This solemn affelevation struck him for some minutes totally silent; at last he gave his feelings words——“Conway! what Conway!” exclaimed he; “the friend, the darling friend of my soul? Can he basely degenerate from himself—and from the soul of honour, turn the vile seducer of his friend’s wife!—Oh! truth, where art thou to be found?” Then, overcome by a sudden emotion of another kind, he quickly exclaimed, “I must have better proofs, Sir, than the bare word of any man, before I suspect that honour I have so long revered, that virtue I have so

" long loved. Your penetration must
" procure me ocular proof of what you
" advance; I must see something to
" awaken suspicions, and excite to sedu-
" lous watchfulness before I will sus-
" pect."

" You may possibly see something
" that may tend to that end, ere it be
" long, if you follow me," returned
Needham coolly, and with an air of re-
sentment that his word should be
doubted.

" Where, where," said Sir Harry, " I
" would follow you for conviction of
" their innocence or guilt, to the ex-
" tremity of the earth."

" This

"This way," said Needham, leading to the Grove. Before they reach it let us return to Conway and Lady Gaythorne.

Though we have seen that Conway was somewhat intoxicated with what Lady Gaythorne had uttered, with expressions and actions so flattering, he yet was sufficiently himself to shudder at the thought of repeating the criminal intercourse which had once taken place, and he endeavoured to give the conversation a less seductive turn. He scarcely allowed himself to touch her hand during their walk; notwithstanding, however, this guarded conduct on his part, one of those incidents in the drama of life, which lead to catastrophic denouements, presented him

to the sight of Sir Harry, seated by her side, with an air of tenderness and familiarity sufficient to justify the suggestions of Needham. A tuft of grass caught Lady Graythorne's foot; she hurt herself but little, but as her custom was, on every occasion that presented the least pretence to affect excessive alarms, she crawled with the appearance of great difficulty to a seat in the walk. After she had sat a few minutes, she acknowledged the pain in her ankle to be somewhat gone off; but finding she had chafed a little of the skin off one of her hands in the fall, pulled out her pocket-book, from whence she produced a piece of court-plaster to apply to it. When she had placed it on the wounded part, she held out her hand with an air of softness, and

and asked Conway to press it on; he did so—with his lips.

Sir Harry, from behind the shade of a tree, first beheld them in this action. The sight operated like a sudden flash of light breaking upon the eyes of one who had been born blind; he could not support it, his very soul sickened, and closing his eyes, he leant for some moments against the tree in a state of total insensibility to every thing around him. Had this gigantic injury been done him by a stranger, rage, which would then have been the *strongest* passion of his soul, might have prompted him to some deed of desperation great as his wrongs against the seducer of his wife, notwithstanding the philosophic mildness which had hitherto

thereto distinguished his spirit. But the deep wound under which his heart now groaned, had been implanted there by a friend, his own familiar friend, and grief and bitter disappointment filled up the place which revenge would have occupied, had an alien been the aggressor.

As soon as he had recovered speech,
“Lead me from the spot,” cried he;
“lead me from it—I can no longer en-
“dure the sight of objects so baleful to
“my peace, another view of them
“would be my death;—’twould be as
“shocking to me to meet their eyes,
“humbled as they must be, as if
“I had myself been the criminal.
“But whither shall I direct my steps?”
said he as he moved from the spot---
“for

“ for to his house I never can return.
“ Yet I will go,” said he after a pause,
“ I will go to the house this instant, and
“ order the carriage, and depart: by let-
“ ter only will I signify to them my know-
“ ledge of their infidelity. Will you ac-
“ company me, Mr. Needham? Perhaps
“ if we hasten we may have made our re-
“ treat before they return.” Tumultuous
as were the sensations of Sir Harry, he
yet had sufficient command of himself
to take a respectful though hasty leave
of Mrs. Conway; to tell her he had
received letters from London that day
which demanded his immediate appear-
ance there on particular business. He had
in truth received letters, though not such
as he described; for on his entering the
house his servant brought him several
which

which had arrived by that day's post. He begged Mrs. Conway to tell Lady Gaythorne he would write a few lines to her whilst post-horses were got ready at the next town, from whence he would send her back the carriage. He added, that Mr. Needham, whose advice might be of great use to him in a present embarrassing predicament, had been obliging enough to offer to accompany him. They both then in a hasty manner bade her adieu, stepped into the carriage, and were driven away.

No sooner were they arrived at the place destined for their halting for the purpose before mentioned, than Sir Harry called for materials for writing, and gave vent to the emotions of his heart

heart in the following letter to Conway.

“ My departure you are, it is most
“ probable, ere this, acquainted with;
“ and the reproaches of your own heart
“ have, I doubt not, been prompt to suggest to you the cause of it. Conway,
“ I yet believe, notwithstanding my full
“ conviction of your criminality in this
“ instance, that though vice may have
“ led your heart astray for a time it will
“ return to its former attachments, and
“ though your conduct has placed an
“ irremovable bar between *us*, my heart
“ bitterly and irrecoverably wounded as
“ it is in the parts occupied by love and
“ friendship, to your domestic feelings
“ yet has respect. Be again happy, if
“ you can be happy (whilst memory
“ paints

“ paints to you the dagger you have
“ placed in my breast) in the esteem, the
“ affection of one of the worthiest wo-
“ men in existence ; I will not tear away
“ the bandage from the eyes of one who
“ doats on you, one whose gentle spirit
“ and tender frame could not support
“ the knowledge of your perfidy. I
“ will not plunge the spear into her
“ breast which has so fatally pierced
“ mine. Adieu! Conway, adieu! for
“ the last time. Oh! God, how fleeting
“ is the happiness of man. But this
“ morning saw me in imagination blest
“ beyond the lot of mortals in a wife, in
“ a friend! the evening sees me de-
“ spoiled of both, sees me the most for-
“ lorn, the most wretched of mankind.
“ Oh Conway, why, why have you com-
“ mitted

“mitted this horrible breach of hospitality, of friendship! Oh my swollen heart——I can add no more.

“Farewell for ever.”

His letter to Lady Gaythorne breathed the same mild, but wounded spirit; it concluded with telling her he had sent back the carriage to conduct her wherever she chose, except to either of his houses; he informed her, that, for the sake of Mrs. Conway's peace, the motives for their separation should be concealed from the world; that he was going to town to have writings drawn for a separate maintenance for her, in the fixing of which she would not find him wanting in generosity.

C H A P. VIII.

CONWAY, on the receipt of Sir Harry Gaythorne's letter, felt as one who, awaking from a dream, finds that while he had been entertained with fruitless illusions, some great and terrible disaster had befallen him, which, had he continued watchful, would never have happened, but which can never be recalled; and whose dreadful effects must embitter with endless regret the remainder of his existence.

A thou-

A thousand times he resolved to throw himself at her feet, to unburthen his heart of this wondrous weight of guilt and remorse; but the knowledge I have before described him to have of her sentiments withheld him; the idea of losing for ever the society, the endearing society of Matilda, was the keenest arrow in the quiver of misfortune; whilst that was unshot, he seemed, though miserable at the present moment, to have some latent hope of future peace; but he felt, that whenever that should enter his breast, his death-wound would enter with it. Such were the feelings of Conway on the perusal of Sir Harry's letter. Lady Gaythorne was as much shocked and surprized as her placid nature would admit

her

her to be—but it was not remorse for her fault, nor regret for the sorrow she had brought on the best and tenderest friend any woman had ever possessed. Her distress, if any she felt, arose from the thought that she was no longer mistress of the elegant mansions in town and country, of Sir Harry Gaythorne, and that her expences must be diminished; for though she had seen enough of the generosity of Sir Harry's spirit, to believe he would deal more liberally by her than almost any other human being would do in the same situation; it yet instantly occurred to her, that half her brilliance was tarnished.

The

The first expression which escaped her Ladyship when she saw Conway alone, was, "How could Sir Harry know this, except by the means of that deceitful Needham?"

"It matters not," replied he; "it is of little consequence how the discovery was made, the fact is not to be denied. See here a letter full of mildness that wounds more than the keenest reproaches; my soul is on the rack." He gave her the letter, and she presented him with that she had received.

Her Ladyship vented her griefs in a few tears, and then her native composure in a great degree returned. She began to look on the most favourable side of
the

the affair; she called to mind that though she should not enjoy all the splendour with which she had been furrounded whilst living with Sir Harry, she yet doubted not but he would enable her to support with propriety of appearance the rank he had given her. And that as her character would not be unveiled, she should every where be received with the respect due to the wife of Sir Harry Gaythorne. With thoughts like these she in a good measure consoled herself; and told Conway she would set out the next morning for Dover, from whence she would embark for France, and wait there the execution of Sir Harry's assurances.

Lady

Lady Gaythorne having made some plausible excuse to Mrs. Conway, departed the next day, as she had determined, and entered on her destined journey.

Vol. II.

G

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

AS soon as the carriage had driven from the house, Conway returned to the parlour, where seating himself in a window, he fell into a deep and gloomy reverie. Matilda, who had taken up her work, stole her eyes from it several times, to mark the melancholy attitude in which he sat. As she looked earnestly upon him, her etwée fell from her lap on the ground; the sound of it interrupted his reverie, and he looked up just in time to perceive her eyes had been fixed on him, and to catch a glimpse of a tear which was falling from her cheek.

He

He rose to present her with what she had let fall; she saw that he had seen her attention to him, and as he gave her the etwee, detained his hand—"My dear Conway," said she, with an air the most tender in the world, "I was once
" society for you—you used to say I
" made amends to you for the loss of
" friends and the world. But do not
" think I mean to reproach you. I would
" far rather comfort you, if I knew how.
" It is natural you should feel the loss
" of a friend, endeared to you long be-
" fore you ever saw me. I respect your
" feelings—I enter into them at this
" moment in the fullest manner."

"Ah! you do not, you cannot—" escaped from his lips, and a sigh accompanied

nied the expression, but recovering himself, he added, leaning his forehead on her hand, "I confess I am not in good
" spirits."

"I know you are not, my love,"
said Matilda, "there are but few people
" who are capable of feeling, (fewer
" who are fated to feel) the sweets of
" friendship in their highest degree—
" and they who are must not expect to
" find the rose without its thorns.—
" The removal of a friend affects the
" generality of persons but like the re-
" moval of a picture: they look at the
" chasm a few times with a slight feeling
" of regret; they perhaps exclaimed, 'it
" was a good piece,' but the sensation
" soon fades away; and in a little they
" entirely

“ entirely forget, unless reminded of it
“ by some adventitious circumstance
“ that the place was ever occupied.”

“ It is well observed indeed,” said
Conway, “ but will you take a walk,
“ Matilda?” “ I should like it very
“ much,” returned she, “ and we will
“ walk, if you please, as far as the Hill,
“ and call on Mrs. Neville?”

“ She will perhaps return and spend
“ the day with us,” replied he. “ I
“ shall be glad if we can prevail upon
“ her to do so.”

“ Go, get your hat and cloak then,”
cried he, “ and we will set out imme-
“ diately.” Matilda, with a smile of

pleasure quitted the room; she was really happier this day than she had been for a long time past, and flattered herself, when that melancholy which the parting with a friend always throws over the feeling mind, had worn off that of Conway, their time would slide on in the same chearful and tranquil manner in which it was used to glide away.

They went to Mrs. Neville's:—She accompanied them back to Conway-Park to dinner. The solicitude of Matilda to enliven the conversation was unremitting. Conway perceived it, but it rather gave him pain than pleasure, by reminding him how unworthy he had rendered himself of it; and he frequently retired.

retired during the day to give vent to feelings which rose to agony.

Mrs. Neville, after dinner, amused Matilda greatly, by sketching her lovely children in a number of picturesque attitudes, whilst their fond mother sat at her needle-work. How pleased, how happy, would Conway have been amidst this tranquil, this heart-foothing groupe, had his bosom enjoyed its accustomed serenity. Towards the close of the evening Mrs. Neville left them, and left them somewhat sooner than she wished to have done, thinking Mr. Conway was indisposed, from that air of restlessness and dejection which all his endeavours could not disguise, and which was so opposite to his usual deportment.

"You are ill Conway," said Matilda, approaching him the moment Mrs. Neville was gone, "you are hot and feverish."

"I have the head-ach to an intolerable degree." "Rest will be the most probable restorative," said she, "go to your chamber and try to sleep.— I will come to you, sit by you, and hold your weary head."

"Wilt thou?" returned he.

"I will, my sweet fellow," said she, "I will." He went to his own room.

When Matilda entered, he had rested head, racked by sad thoughts, on his pillow.

pillow. The window nearest him was open, Matilda approached to shut it:—some wandering branches of the rose and jessamine trees that covered the walls, with welcome intrusion, hung into the room,—she gathered some of their fresh and fragrant flowerets, and laid them wet with the dew of evening on the burning temples, on the parched lips of Conway.—With what a mixture of emotions did he press the lovely hand that with such soft and sweet attention administered the balmy, though momentary refreshment!

He begged her to bind his head tight with her handkerchief—she did so; he closed his eyes with the hope of sleep; he sighed, that to sleep was not an act of

volition. The sweets of forgetfulness were denied him; at last his wearied frame reposed itself to sleep, but his tortured fancy was still filled with all that had pained it waking, and scenes of horror and wild affright deepened every pang.

The night waned apace. The servants were all gone to rest, but Matilda had not yet undressed. Conway dreamed that he was in the presence of his injured friend. "Alas!" said he, "far better had it been you had plunged your sword into my breast, and robbed me of an existence which must be forever miserable! your attention to my domestic comfort is of no avail—How can I enjoy a respect, an affection, I feel I have not deserved." Then again,

as if answering to something which had been said, he exclaimed, "No, she is not here, she went from hence this morning, to Dover—to Dover I believe."

Matilda turning pale and cold as marble, during the articulation of these words, involuntarily advanced her ear nearer and nearer to his pillow, which failed not to drink in every syllable he uttered. In a moment the dreadful mystery was unveiled, she now comprehended the motives for the sudden departure of her guests. Conway awaked with the full impression of his dream on his mind. The attitude, the expression of countenance of Matilda called to his recollection the words he had just uttered.

ed. The most excruciating pangs rived his breast, his head sunk on the pillow. A chillness, nearly resembling that of death furrounded the heart of the despairing Matilda.—“ The blow is given,” said she, and crawling to the table with slow and feeble steps, she took up the candle and left the room; she crossed the passage and went into a chamber on the other side of it.—The moon shone not out clear, but sent forth a faint sickly light; Matilda placed the candle in the chimney and seated herself upon a chair opposite to the window. Extreme grief often wears for a time the appearance of insensibility; Matilda was astonished at her own composure, she seemed incapable of sensation, her heart turned to marble, but when this rigidity of the soul, if I
may

may be allowed the expression, had given way, it melted into tears of anguish. An incessant weeping of several hours at length exhausted her strength, and weighed down her eye-lids for a few minutes. But from this short slumber she was awakened by a sudden trampling of feet; awakened to feel that deep, overwhelming, indescribable sickness of the soul, with which sorrow returns after a momentary suspension. It was her little ones she heard, who were being brought down to take their accustomed walk before breakfast, it would have been almost death to her to have seen them in her present state of mind. Seized with horror at the bare idea of their breaking in upon her, she sprung from her seat, and flew with celerity to bolt
the

the door. Ah! the lacerated, the agonizing heart of the tender Matilda, to bolt the door against, the children of Conway!

CHAP.

C H A P. IX.

AS the hour of breakfast approached, she began to collect herself a little more, in order to appear before the servants with somewhat of her accustomed manner; she imagined Conway would breakfast in his own chamber, which gave her more resolution to descend; and was a good deal surpris'd, when bidding the servant inquire where Mr. Conway would breakfast, he answered that his master had walked out early in the morning.

Matilda changed colour—but endeavoured to hide her emotion from the man, by saying—"I thought he would not have been stirring so early this morning,

“ morning, as his head was so bad last
“ night.”

Matilda, terrified and alarmed, waited impatiently for his coming back, though not with the wish of conversing with him. In an hour he returned; and entered the room in which she sat with an aspect the most melancholy and dejected; the wildness of despair in his eyes, when he turned them upon her—Matilda would have left the room in silence, and have gone immediately to her own, but he detained her.—“ Stay, “ Matilda,” cried he, “ stay, for Heaven’s sake; have you nothing, not one “ word to utter to a wretch who is sick “ of life; reproaches, the most cutting “ reproaches, would be better than this “ horrid silence?—Is there then no hope
“ of

“ of reconciliation? Speak to me, in
“ mercy speak to me?”

“ Conway,” said Matilda, with the
most touching aspect, “ I *have* loved
“ you, *fondly* loved you,—your interest,
“ the interest of those little beings, whose
“ voices we now hear, must ever be near
“ to my heart.—For *their* sakes, I will
“ still remain on the spot, where I have
“ seen all my happiness on this side the
“ grave perish for ever. I shall resemble
“ the tree, which though blasted itself,
“ serves yet to shelter from keen winds,
“ or parching suns, the tender plants
“ that surround it.”

“ Oh Matilda, Matilda!” cried he,
interrupting her, “ You tear up, you rend
“ my

“ my very soul !—Oh ! that you could
“ read my heart !—Do not, do not send
“ me from you—believe that I never
“ will, that I could not bear—to be the
“ witness of so cold, so heartless, so
“ changed a scene—If you could pardon,
“ we might yet be happy, be blest as
“ ever.”

“ Never, O never !” cried Matilda,
“ for us the rose of domestic happiness
“ has long bloomed ;—but it has now
“ shed its last leaves. The mutual
“ hope, the mutual fear, the fond reci-
“ procations of soft and generous affec-
“ tions are no more for us. Alas ! Con-
“ way, there is no cement that can unite
“ the broken bands of wedded confi-
“ dence.”

“ Recall,

“ Recall, recall,” cried he, with frantic eagerness, “ those terrible expressions—there is, there must, there shall be found some perfect cement; let forgiveness close this dreadful chasm.”

“ Impossible! impossible!” returned Matilda, “ it will not do,—indeed it will not—for I have forgiven you, Conway, indeed I have—I bear you no resentment, not one spark; but I have a chill aching sickness at my heart;—it is quite cold, it answers not to your voice as it used to do;—it does not even melt at your tears—distrust and gloomy suspicion have barred every avenue to it.”

“ Oh!

“ Oh! God of Heaven,” cried he, holding tight his beating brain; “ what shall become of me; unsay, unsay those dreadful words.” Matilda moved her head, her hand fell motionless by her side.—She opened the door,—he seized, and would have detained her, but a servant going by at the moment, obliged him to endeavour to hide his feelings, and he suffered Matilda to leave him.

Matilda retired to her own chamber, with a heart laden with despair; she sometimes tried to soften it to the point he wished, that of entire reconciliation, but it would not do.—She was not apt to be severe to mark the failings of others; but this great breach of moral rectitude had

had shaken her confidence, and though tenderness remained, esteem stood tottering on the brink of annihilation. Alas! she could no longer point him out to herself, to her children, as the model of human perfection. She felt all that human nature, disappointed of its highest delight, knows to feel. Her spirits were sunk to the most gloomy state of dejection.

C H A P.

C H A P. X.

MATILDA passed the succeeding day in a state of indifference to every thing around her, except the object which had caused this mighty revolution in her soul. She felt that weariness of life, that dreadful chasm in the heart, which only a disappointment in its tenderest affections can inspire. The hours of Conway were spent in the most dreadful agitations one can conceive. Matilda endeavoured, as she could not give him consolation, to avoid seeing him, except when the duties of her family obliged her to quit her
OWN

own apartment, and when night came, and she retired for the last time, she drew the bolt which secured to her without interruption, the solitary indulgence of her mournful reflections. The third morning arrived since the painful discovery: Matilda descended in the same frame of mind she had departed to retirement, but with additional paleness, and sadness of aspect. Conway, wrung to the soul, rose when she entered, took her hand, and led her to her seat, she looked upon him with an air of perfect meekness, she waved her head with that hopeless expression, which is of all others the most heart-rending.

The heart of Conway was swollen with agony—he turned away, he walked with
a hasty

a hasty pace to the other end of the room; he leaned against the window whilst the big drops gushed from his eyes.

“ Oh ! Matilda,” he exclaimed, “ why
“ are you so inflexible ?—Why, may we
“ not try to regain that happy state we
“ once possessed.”

“ Do not speak of it, do not speak
“ of it,” said Matilda, with a low, quick,
and agitated voice, “ it can never be re-
“ gained.—It was too pure, too unmix-
“ ed a felicity to endure—’tis gone !—
“ *That* was the Summer of our fortunes,
“ Conway ! their chilling winter is ar-
“ rived, and its keen blasts have bowed
“ me

“me to the earth.—Happiness is no
“more for me.”

A servant came into the room, Conway assumed a momentary composure, he went to the breakfast table, he moistened his parched lips with the tea she had poured for him:—he took up something to eat; but the moment the servant left the room he laid it down untouched, he snatched up his hat and wandered wildly into the garden.

This day passed in the same gloomy manner the proceeding one had done. “Sad hours seem long,” that of retirement at last arrived, Matilda rose to withdraw. Conway, who had sat silent for some time indulging the despairing ideas her conduct inspired, now sprung distractedly from his seat, “And must I,”

VOL.II.

H

cried

cried he, "and must I pass another tedious night alone—a prey to gloomy reflections and bitter self-reproach: Oh! Matilda, my brain is convulsed with pain—I shiver with horror—your inflexibility will kill me;—this dreadful state, by Heaven, I cannot, cannot bear—Oh! soothe me, Matilda, as you were used to do; forgive me; tell me that you forgive me."

"I do forgive you, Conway, yes, on my soul, I do forgive you, but I cannot make professions of fondness; do not ask me for them; for how valueless would they be, whether made by words or actions, if they came not from the heart: how different! but I will not dwell on the idea of what
" has

“ has been.—Conway, I confess I do
“ not feel for you what I once did. It
“ is certain, I am greatly changed, more
“ than I believe you imagine, or I could
“ have conceived possible—indeed I am,
“ and is it not best, then, and is it not much
“ best, then, that we should henceforth
“ live together but as common friends?
“ for to us who have known every ten-
“ der sensation of which the heart is ca-
“ pable, what can the cold caresses of re-
“ duced affection bring but painful and
“ bitter recollections?”

“ Oh! God of Heaven!” he ex-
claimed, “ is this, Matilda, is this the
“ only consolation you leave with me?
“ What shall become of me? You drive
“ me to the last despair. But I have

“ now lost all hope;—I see that you hate
“ me, and I will no more trouble you
“ with the sufferings of such a wretch as
“ I am—be they what they may.” He
now let go her hand, and threw himself
on a chair, his head supported by his
hands, which rested on his knees. Ma-
tilda seized the opportunity of hastening
out of the room.

C H A P

C H A P. XI.

MATILDA had not been in the breakfast parlour many minutes the next morning before a woman servant brought her a letter directed to her by the hand of Conway.

“ My master, Madam, desired me to
“ give you this; as soon as you were
“ stirring—he forgot something I be-
“ lieve he meant to have said to you
“ last night; and would not have you
“ disturbed so early.”

With difficulty Matilda kept herself from uttering an exclamation of surprise, the moment the servant was gone she broke open the letter and read it.

“ It informed her, in language the
“ most touching, that unable to bear the
“ change which his own conduct had occasioned, he had quitted his once happy dwelling, designing to go to some
“ retired part of France, there to live
“ in solitude and obscurity, till time
“ should have enabled him to bear with
“ more patience the idea of living with
“ the woman he adored on the terms of
“ a common friend; or rendered her less
“ inexorable to his ardent prayers for
“ pardon and reconciliation, both of
“ which he despaired of. That he had left
“ her

“ her in the full possession of every thing
“ he had, and should only draw from
“ time to time for such sums as were
“ necessary for a retired life; that he
“ should send the servant back with his
“ horse the moment he had stepped into
“ a post-chaise.”

It would be impossible to describe with accuracy the feelings of Matilda on reading this letter—she stood for some minutes, as if petrified. Horror seized her, she felt a dread, lest despair should drive him to some act of desperation; she almost wished she had endeavoured to have concealed her feelings; she even thought of sending a messenger to recall him, but then her former sensations returned.

H 4

“ But

“ But oh!” she cried, “ to what do
“ I recall him? to nothing but certain
“ misery, for we can never, never again
“ be happy.” Her grief at this moment
was the most absolute that can be con-
ceived. She stood in the place where
she had first opened the letter, fixed and
rooted to the spot; her eyes noticed not
a single object that surrounded her, till
the sound of her children’s voices, who
were returning from their morning walk,
struck her ear; they saw her from the
parlour window and would make their
way to her.

“ My dear Mama,” said the eldest,
“ we met Papa as we were going a-
“ walking, and he got off his horse, and
“ kissed us all, and took leave; and we
“ cried

“ cried to go with him, and I think Papa
“ cried to leave us, too, for his eyes
“ were red, Mama, and I felt him wet
“ my cheek.”

What were the feelings of the poor Matilda? She snatched up the child, she hid her emotions in his little bosom which she bedewed with heart-wrung tears.

“ Don’t cry, Mama,” said the child,
“ don’t cry, Mama; see Charlotte and I
“ don’t cry any more: Papa will soon
“ come back; he never stays away long
“ you know.”

“ Ah no,” cried Matilda, “ nor he
“ nor happiness, nor peace, will ever re-
“ visit this once joyous, but now deso-

“late dwelling. Go, my little loves,”
“added she, after giving vent to her
fast-flowing tears, “go and get your
“breakfasts, I will see you again after-
“wards: I am not well now and you
disturb me.” She kissed them and sent
them away.

The man returned in a few hours;
Matilda, after some time, recollected
Conways desire at the bottom of the note,
that his clothes might be sent after him
to an hotel in London, the name of which
he mentioned. She summoned with
difficulty resolution enough to enter the
room, which she had never been in
for a single moment since the fatal night
that her peace had received the horrid
stab that now caused all her pain; every
object

object she beheld made the deep wound bleed afresh, she opened the drawers to take out what things of his she had under her care.

She found herself unable to proceed several times, a secret horror unnerved her hands; she let them slip from it more than once, and had resolved to lock the drawers, and to write to intreat him to return. But the same feelings which had prompted her conduct the succeeding days instantly re-assumed their empire in her breast, and impelled her to continue the painful office he had requested her to perform: as she was leaving the room, on passing the bed she cast her eyes on her watch which hung on one side of it, and had remained there ever since the night

which had seen her happiness fade away,

“ Like the baseless fabric of a vision”.

It is strange that the suddenly beholding again objects the most trivial, which we saw at the moment a great calamity befel us, shall have power to give a keener edge to griefs which have near left the heart; and recall the features of our affliction (if I may be allowed the expression,) with greater force to the mind. But it is so.—Matilda felt the truth of this in looking upon her watch, which had never been wound up since that melancholy period. How much is the soul at all times affected by sensible objects! “ Oh”, she exclaimed frequently, “ that I too could then have lost the power of marking the fleeting hours! what pangs should I have escaped, what years

“ years of melancholy ! but I will not
“ murmur, why should I expect a longer
“ term of earthly happiness than others ?
“ What am I that I should not expe-
“ rience the same changes from the high-
“ est possible felicity to the deepest pitch
“ of disappointment and woe to which
“ others are subjected ? I will be resign-
“ ed, and wait the hour of release with
“ christian fortitude.” She said, and
burst into a fresh flood of tears that shook
her frame with agony.

C H A P. XII.

IT was necessary Conway should go to London, before he left the kingdom, respecting some business which concerned the interest of his family. He went on his arrival to an hotel near St. James's Street. It was late in the evening when he got into town, but as soon as he had breakfasted the next morning, he walked out to call upon the parties with whom he had business to transact. He walked through the streets with a dead and gloomy weight upon his spirits; his blood crept silently through his veins; except when glancing his eyes around they

they caught some form or countenance that in any degree resembled Matilda; and however absurd and groundless the idea, an irresistible impulse led him several times to stand still to gaze on some particular object, thinking for the moment he saw her at a distance.

At length his eyes, tired, and aching with continually regarding objects with a perception so minute, rested on a spectacle so shocking to his feelings as almost to deprive him, for some moments, of the faculty of sight. In crossing one of the squares he saw Sir Harry Gaythorne and Needham step out of the carriage of the former, and go into a house where Conway and his friend often used to visit when they were in town together. The
sight

fight of the man who had acted so treacherous a part apparantly in a habit of close intimacy with his friend; an intimacy brought on by that dreadful event which had severed Conway and Sir Harry for ever, filled the former with the most complicated and violent emotions; madness almost came upon him; he uttered an execration though alone; and entering the first coffee-house he came to, called for a pen and ink, and in the bitterness of his wounded spirit wrote a challenge to Needham, which he immediately sent to the coffee-house he knew he frequented; a challenge, dictated perhaps more by feelings of despair and weariness of life, had they been strictly analized, than by the desire of revenge.

C H A P. XIII.

THE sad Matilda, left to the entire indulgence of her gloomy musings, wandered like a troubled ghost about the lonely spot, which had, till this period, appeared to her an earthly paradise; for the taste of Conway had directed every shrub and flower to rise; fashioned every shady walk, each cool sequestered grot and gay alcove!

After returning from one of those melancholy rambles, on the second day of Conway's departure, she seated herself in the parlour, leaning on her arm full
of

of reflection, memory recalled, with torturing minuteness, a thousand lovely scenes of innocent pleasure. In the first transports of her affliction on the discovery of Conway's infidelity, her imagination had persuaded her judgement there was something meritorious in not poorly endeavouring to endure a mediocrity of existence, after having experienced every animated, every delightful sensation which love, innocence, and the intercourse of intelligent minds, unalloyed by worldly cares, can bestow. But now that she was left entirely alone, and a calm melancholy had succeeded to those racking emotions her grief-swollen heart had at first sustained, she began to look with a more philosophic eye on her situation: she became in some degree more reconciled

reconciled to the idea of putting a force on her inclinations, and endeavouring to make the life of Conway as happy as possible, though the recollection of former confidence, of former entire faith, might sometimes draw forth a pang, a sigh, a starting tear of tender sorrow from her breast.

That person must have observed very little of human nature, who thinks the historian of Matilda records an unnatural fiction, when he describes the change which took place in her soul. He must have remarked but little on the operations of the heart, who has not observed in what strongly contrasted colours the same actions and circumstances appear to the "mind's eye" at different periods,

as

as thought and reflection vary their positions.

Matilda knew from the note he left for her, that Conway meant to stay in London a few days before he left the kingdom; therefore relied that a letter would find him still there.—After some time she brought herself to resolve to write to solicit his return; she took up a pen and wrote instantly. When she had sent her letter to the post, her mind became as it were new made; her breast was no longer agitated by painful and turbulent emotions, she was not chearful, but she was tranquil. Her soul experienced the dead calm which precedes a tempest. In this state of mind she passed the remainder of the day. In the evening her

her little ones were brought to her, to bid her adieu for the night; and to receive their parting kifs.

“ Mama,” said the eldest boy, as she took him in her arms, “ Mama, when will Papa come back?—I think it’s a long time that he has been gone. When he went away once before, Mama, you used to make us kifs Papa’s picture every night; shall we kifs it now?”

“ Yes, my love,” said Matilda, almost choaked with tears, and quitting the room. She went up stairs; she took a miniature of Conway from a drawer, for the first time since his departure; she kissed it many times; she pressed it

wet

wet with tears to her bosom.—“ Oh my
“ poor Conway,” exclaimed she, “ I
“ had indeed a hard heart to suffer
“ thee to abandon thy home, thy coun-
“ try; to give thee up after years of
“ tenderness and truth, for one fault.
“ All-righteous Heaven! forgives a
“ thousand repeated trespasses in his
“ weak creatures, and suffers them to
“ live without the heavy weight of his
“ displeasure incessantly preying on
“ their hearts; but I, frail mortal, how
“ have I acted?”—She knelt down, she
prayed with the most ardent devotion
for a few minutes, intreating to be di-
rected to that mode of conduct which
should eventually be productive of
peace and comfort to the wounded

spirit of Conway!—She arose with a mind more serene, and descended to her children with the picture in her hand.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIV.

THE next afternoon Matilda having tired herself with alternately reading and working at her needle, wandered into the shrubbery—she reached the spot where had once occurred a little incident which we recorded in the first volume of this work. The recollection of an incident which did so much honour to the heart and the principles of Conway, gave a more than common softness to the mind of Matilda, and disposed it for more pleasing contemplations than it had long felt itself inclined to indulge ; she seated herself

herself on a sloping turf; and soothed by the serenity of the situation, the chant of birds, and the sweet incense that breathed around her, she fell into a deep reverie. Whilst thus musing, a gentle slumber closed her eyes, and fancy free and unconfined painted every object in its favourite colours. Matilda beheld in imagination Conway return; she seemed in a few short moments to pass whole years of sweet and tranquil delight—she felt renewed all those soft and blooming transports, which had danced round her heart when she first visited the mansion of Conway.

The sound of feet awaked her from this soothing dream, and the fairy vision instantly vanished from her mind. The

moment she awoke, the impression of past sorrows rushed upon her startled imagination. These feelings were prophetic! A servant approached her with a letter. She took it from him—she read it. Conway was ill, and wrote with an unsteady hand to intreat to see her. A dying faintness, a sudden heat overspread her frame. She with difficulty, by the aid of salts, kept herself from fainting. At last she recovered herself sufficiently to exclaim—"I will go." She crawled with slow steps, and faint, to the house; gave orders for a few necessaries to be packed up; sent a servant to order a post-chaise, and prepared herself for her immediate departure.

She

She took a hasty, but affecting leave of her children. The man quickly returned, and prepared himself to attend her to town. The chaise came with all possible expedition to the door. Matilda and her own maid stepped into it, followed by the tearful eyes of the women servants who were left behind, and who had lived with her ever since her first settling in the country, and had both for her and their master nearly the affection of dutiful children.

Fearless of danger, Matilda travelled the whole night, and arrived in town about the middle of the next day.

At the entrance of St. James's-street she saw Sir Harry Gaythorne on foot,

I 2

their

their eyes met; he bowed—she ordered the driver to stop. Sir Harry approached the side of the chaise with a look of deep concern.

“Your friend is ill,” said she, with extreme agitation, “dangerously ill.”

“I hope he is not, Madam, so bad
“as you imagine—I am told,” said he, with the hope of supporting her spirits,
“that his wounds are not dangerous.”

“His wounds!” exclaimed Matilda with extreme precipitation and a look of horror, “his wounds! God of Heaven!
“What wounds?”

“Alas!”

“ Alas !” cried Sir Harry, “ What
“ have I unguardly done ? You are not
“ apprized then—.”

“ Tell me the worst at once,” cried
she, interrupting him, “ with you has
“ he fought—in mercy tell me ? Re-
“ lieve me from this horrid suspense ?”

“ With Needham, with Needham,”
returned Sir Harry : “ Heavens ! that I
“ should have been the messenger of
“ such information—but you must have
“ known it, you will know every thing
“ too soon.”

Matilda made no answer, she shed
not a tear, she lifted her eyes to Heaven
with an eye of anguish so tempered by

resignation, that Sir Harry looked upon her at the moment above mortality; he could not longer endure the touching sight. He pressed her hand as it rested on the door of the chaise, "Heaven support you," he breathed out, and hastily retired.

"Go on," said she to the driver, the moment Sir Harry had left them, without the least agitation in her voice. And folding her arms, she sat with the fixed look of hopeless, yet resigned grief.

When she arrived at the inn, excessive fatigue, joined to the new shock she had received, had so exhausted her strength, that she was obliged to be supported into the house by her woman, who, weeping, intreated

intreated her to take something before she ventured to see her master: "No," said she, "lead me to him this instant; " perhaps, even now, I am arrived too late to receive his last breath, to close his dying eyes." Here her voice failed her---she followed in silence the servant who waited to conduct her to the apartment where Conway was. They had gained the door:---Matilda turned about, "You see, Jane," said she, "it is too true what my fears presaged, there is no hope;---no one since we have entered the house has even attempted to inspire me with it; but it is well that I know the worst:---for what, in such a case, would fallacies avail---they could not extend beyond the grave."

Jane could only reply by a gush of sympathising tears.

The door was opened—"Now leave me," said she. They retired—she approached with trembling steps to the foot of the bed—her whole frame shook---she supported herself by one of the posts; Conway with a faint hand put back the curtains:---he saw her---and with strength given him by emotion, raised himself up.---Matilda flew to him;---she laid his dying head and pale cheek on her bosom---she bedewed it with cold and bitter tears.

"Oh! Matilda," cried he, "thou art too good, too kind, too indulgent: I have not deserved---alas! at what an hour

“ hour thou comest. Dost thou know
“ Thou must, thou wilt know it. Ma-
“ tilda, I am dying, my doom is fixed;
“ but thou comest, as thou hast always
“ appeared to me, like a benignant angel
“ ---thou comest with pardon, with fond
“ forgiveness, and I shall die content,
“ and hope for future mercy.”

“ Oh! speak not so, my life, my all,”
cried Matilda; “ thou yet will live
“ to soothe, to revive my drooping
“ heart.”

“ No, it cannot be.—Matilda, I have
“ requested to be told my fate; I know of
“ a certainty I have not many hours to
“ exist with thee here—but oh! I trust
“ in that mercy which is infinite, and
“ hope to meet thee in another state.”

I -

“ Oh!”

“ Oh !” exclaimed Matilda, “ I
“ have killed thee, barbarous as I was.
“ Oh, Conway, how hard and unrelenting
“ was my heart; I drove thee from thy
“ home to madness, to do a deed of def-
“ peration which has murdered thee:
“ can’st thou forgive me ?”

“ Forgive thee !” cried he drawing her
to his breast with all the little strength he
yet possessed : “ Had’st thou done any
“ thing to need forgiveness, the moments,
“ hours, the years of bliss we have passed
“ together might cancel every fault :
“ but I, Matilda, I am the wretch to
“ need forgiveness: my follies have
“ brought this dreadful wreck of hap-
“ piness upon us; we have been
“ happy! yes! we have! witness ye
“ smiling

“ smiling hours, ye moments winged
“ with innocent delight—oh thoughts
“ which stab the heart, while recollection
“ warms it. Were we not happy, Ma-
“ tilda? Were we not? But what a-
“ vails it now? Pardon, and peace, are
“ now the only comforts I can know.”

“ Yes, Conway,” yes, cried Matilda
with the tone of bitter anguish, “ we
“ have indeed been happy;---I believe,
“ firmly believe we have known as much
“ of happiness as mortals ever know,
“ but it was all crouded into a few short
“ years :---’twas so uninterrupted till it
“ intirely vanished, and the sad tempest,
“ which at length tore it from us, came
“ so suddenly, so unlooked for, that its
“ mighty devastations appear with tenfold
I 6 “ horror.

“horror. Sad comfortless, forlorn, despairing will thy fond Matilda wander through the world without her guide, her kind, indulgent, generous guide; all, all, that her soul rested on for this world’s comfort for ever, ever flown.”

“Alas!” said Conway with a faint voice, and growing weaker and weaker every moment he spoke, “*thou* wilt be supported through every trial: the consciousness of thy own undeviating rectitude will support thee. For me, who have embittered by one fatal error my whole existence, were it to be extended to a long period for me, there is no hope of peace but in the tomb.--- My friend, my injured, noble, unsuspecting, generous, friend.”

“ Alas ! I have not that sweet consolation you speak of,” returned Matilda,
“ I have it not, Conway. I have been
“ to *thee* cruel, hard, and unforgiving.
“ I had reposed too much on what this
“ world of passage had to give. I had not
“ prepared myself to submit to the will
“ of Heaven, though it should snatch
“ from me the best blessings it had lent.
“ I did not make sufficient allowance for
“ the failings of humanity. I did not
“ reflect till too late that all-wise Providence
“ sometimes permits the best,
“ the most perfect of its creatures to
“ fall into deep and unlooked-for errors,
“ to shew us that even the best disposed
“ by nature, must never, for a single
“ moment, slacken the reins of self-
“ controul. The good man who falls
“ into vice, resembles as often the traveller
“ veller

“ veller, who slipping from a preci-
“ pice, is in a moment dashed to the
“ bottom, as the one who almost im-
“ perceptibly rolls down a soft and gen-
“ tle declivity.”

“ Oh! thou,” cried Conway, “ the best,
“ the kindest of thy sex, thou wert ever
“ just and good, far, far beyond what
“ I deserved to possess.—Wilt thou not,
“ Matilda, be comforted? Wilt thou
“ not strive to live when I am no more?
“ Wilt thou not live, Matilda, for our
“ children? Do not tell them my sad story;
“ I have still so much of wordly weakness
“ left, I would not have them hate my
“ memory;---dear innocents! what a
“ sad and fatal parting was our last---
“ Matilda, they still twine about my
“ heart, for they are thine. Wilt thou
“ not

“ not strive to live for Conway’s children?
“ dren? ’tis the last request he makes
“ thee: Wilt thou not promise him the
“ last request?”

“ Oh! thou art faint indeed,” said she,
“ but not in eloquence; I *will* endeavour
“ to sustain the hard, hard load of
“ life---I will, for Conway’s children,
“ I will preserve the little health misery
“ may yet have left me. Oh! may
“ they never know the fond unutterable
“ bliss of real love, or knowing, never
“ feel its keen, its drear reverse.”

“ Thou dost then promise?” cried
Conway with a faint and dying voice.

“ I do, I do,” exclaimed Matilda,
supporting his sinking head with her arm.

“ Oh!

" Oh ! thou art dying ;---Conway,
" my life, my love ! speak to me ?
" Alas ! alas ! he will speak no more."

The piercing tones of her voice brought the nurse and Mrs. Conway's woman, who attended in an adjoining chamber, to her assistance. Conway had fainted. They believed that he had expired, and would have persuaded Matilda to have left the room ;---but she would not leave him, she still held his head, and pressed his cold cheek with her trembling lips. They used every means to recal him to life, Matilda persisting that he was not dead.

Just then a gentle rapping was heard at the door. It was the man servant, who announced to the nurse that Sir Harry Gaythorne was below, and asked if he might be admitted. They inquir-

ed if Mrs. Conway chose to see him.
“ Let him,” said Matilda, “ be told
“ the situation of his friend ! and let
“ him act as his own feelings suggest ; I
“ am alike indifferent to every thing.”

Conway at length shewed symptoms of returning life ; he opened his eyes ; he fixed them on Matilda. He moved his lips, but he uttered not an articulate sound ; she regarded his countenance with a look of fixed and piercing inquiry, hoping there to find expressed, what his tongue could not pronounce. But the dull vacant eye spoke not ; and the movement of his features denoted nothing but bodily pain. Oh bitter sight ! the most horrible she yet had seen

Sir Harry Gaythorne just now came in, he approached the sad spectacle ; he uttered

tered an exclamation of horror. He threw himself beside the bed; holding the dying hand of his friend. A ray of intelligence once more illumined the eyes of Conway; he regarded Matilda and Sir Harry with a look of tenderness; he appeared to know them. They looked upon each other with the glances of self-flattering hope; the breath had issued from their lips, they were about to say, "He will again be sensible to our cares." But the momentary glimmering of reason disappeared before they could form an articulate sound; and the same dull vacant gloom again overspread his once animated aspect. The wretched Matilda clung closer and closer to his insensible form. The agonies of death came strong upon him. They at last forced

forced her from him, and carried her almost by violence into another apartment.

Conway, after some hours of extreme suffering, expired that night.

Matilda would not quit the house, till the remains of her beloved Conway were removed from it. She took a last view, before the body was conveyed away, of that loved face which she had so often seen, whilst he gazed on her countenance, animated by the serene smile of tranquil satisfaction, or the vivid glances of delighted admiration; and when she was at length compelled to withdraw her eyes from this still dear object, the sole wish of her soul was, that they might close for ever.

C H A P. XVI.

MATILDA given up to the deepest, the most entire grief, returned into the country. That moment when she came within sight of her own dwelling, her woman, who was in the carriage with her, believed would have been her last. She cried, in a voice that thrilled the soul with horror, "He passed those gates for the last time, urged by my unrelenting conduct. I banished him from his home, *for ever* banished him."

She

She fainted before she reached the house, and was lifted out of the carriage and carried lifeless into it. She at length recovered sense and motion, but several days elapsed before she could bear the sight of her children; she suffered them not to know she was returned, dreading the earnest, though fond inquiries they would make after their lost parent. She shut herself up in her own room. She eat nothing but what in pity to the intreaties of her weeping domestics, she forced herself to take; her time passing, sometimes in the midst of bitter mournings, sometimes of violent bursts of grief, or earnest and solemn supplications to the Almighty for strength to enable her to endure with fortitude and resignation his all-wise, though hard decrees.

Religion

Religion at length worked its usual effects on a mind enlightened by strong sense, and supported by just principles; it softened, though it could never remove her griefs, and she bore without murmuring a loss she could not but lament every hour she was destined to sojourn in this vale of woe.

The lessons of allowing for the imperfections of others; of guarding against the first tendencies to a deviation from rectitude, and preparing to submit with resignation to the disposals of Infinite Wisdom, were daily inculcated to her children with sedulous attention and fond anxiety. Sir Harry Gaythorne intreated to share in the cares attending the education of her children; he took the direction of her son's education,

cation, and the care of his future fortunes entirely upon himself. The youth has done honour to his family, and distinguished himself in the line of military glory. Her daughter grew up, like herself, sensible, elegant, tender and affectionate. Their respect for their mother rose almost to adoration. She was indeed, when I saw her, seven years after the death of Conway, the most interesting object grief had ever made. I beheld her in the midst of her children: the first view I caught of her countenance, gave me to see the furrows which severe suffering and frequent weeping had worn in a face, on which Time had left no other traces of his flight. She joined, at times, with a soft and playful vivacity, in the chearful conversation of the young people who surrounded her; but this

was

was momentary! I perceived the quick transitions which frequently took place. Often, before the smile had vanished, a sudden recollection would draw forth the starting tear, which was quickly suppressed, but which never failed to call a sympathetic drop into the eye of sensibility, that never tired of gazing on this lovely, this edifying woman. One was often distressed how to conceal from her the sensations she inspired; but one needed not to have given it a thought—she was on those occasions too much absorbed in the sad reflection of the moment, to observe what passed around her.

.....

THE END.



